



# RESCUE

Resources & Education for Stroke Caregivers'  
Understanding & Empowerment

# SIMPLE WAYS TO RELIEVE STRESS



# Objectives

- **Learn different ways to reduce stress.**
  - **Rate your stress level before and after using these techniques.**
  - **Practice at least one way to reduce stress that works for you.**
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# How Stressed Are You?

- Rate your stress before using a technique.

You can use this Stress Scale:

Relaxed	Slightly Tense	Somewhat Tense	Very Tense	Extremely Tense
1	2	3	4	5

- Also, rate your stress after using a technique.

# Techniques You Will Learn

- **Abdominal Breathing**
- **Guided Imagery**
- **Muscle Relaxation**
- **Music Relaxation**



*\* A link to some guided practice with these techniques is at the end of the presentation.*

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# Practice the Techniques

- Practice the techniques several times a day when you are NOT STRESSED.
- Then, when you feel stress, use a technique that works for you.

# Abdominal Breathing

- **This is a kind of deep breathing that is relaxing. It is also good for your health.**
- **Never hold your breath so long that you feel uncomfortable or dizzy.**



# Abdominal Breathing

## STEP 1

- **Lie down or sit in a chair.**
- **Put one hand on your upper chest. Put the other hand on your upper stomach.**

# Abdominal Breathing

## STEP 2

- **Breathe in slowly and deeply.**
  - **Focus on filling your lungs with air from the bottom to the top.**
  - **Make sure that your hand on your stomach rises higher than the one on your chest.**
- **Hold breath for up to a count of 7 (or less if you have discomfort).**

# Abdominal Breathing

## STEP 3

- **Slowly breathe out to a count of 8.**
  - **Focus on getting all the air out of your lungs.**
- **Your stomach should pull in as you breathe out.**
- **Your jaw, shoulders, and arms should feel loose and limp.**

# Abdominal Breathing

## STEP 4

- Repeat these steps 5 times.
  - Leave a 10 second break between deep breaths .
- As you practice, you can start saying relaxing phrases.
  - Words like “Peace,” “Love” or “Let Go” are relaxing to some people.
  - Pick a word or phrase, and say it as you breathe out.

# Guided Imagery

- **Think of a place that makes you feel calm and relaxed.**
- **Close your eyes.**
- **Take a few deep breaths.**
- **Picture your calm place in your mind.**
- **What's it like there?**
  - **Use all of your senses.**
  - **Try to see, hear, smell, taste, and feel everything in your calm place.**





# Guided Imagery

- **Spend a few minutes to take in the feeling of calmness.**
  - **When you feel refreshed, slowly bring yourself back to the present.**
  - **Count to 3 and then open your eyes.**
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# Muscle Relaxation

- **Find a comfortable place to lie down.**
  - ▣ **Take your shoes off.**
  - ▣ **Loosen your clothing.**
- **Close your eyes.**



# Muscle Relaxation

- **Breathe slowly and deeply.**
- **Notice any parts of your body that feel tense or uncomfortable.**
  - ▣ **Focus your energy on relaxing those parts of your body as you breathe**
- **Now start with your head.**
  - ▣ **Focus on the way your forehead, cheeks, and jaw feel.**

# Muscle Relaxation

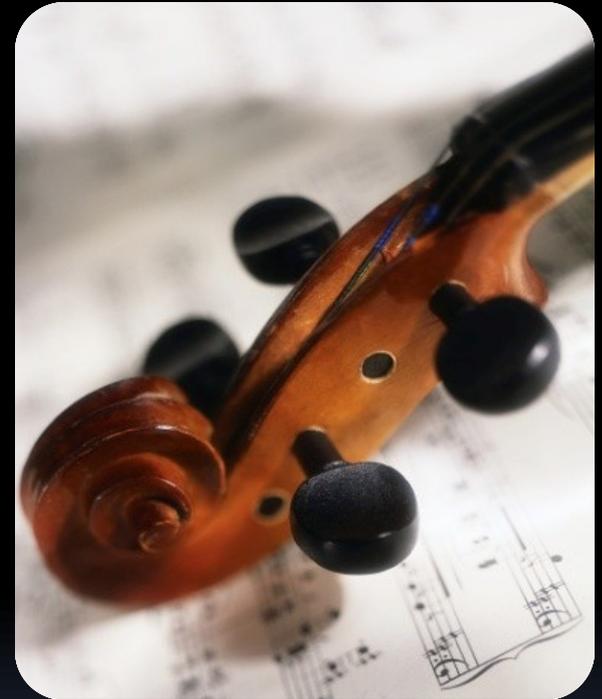
- **Slowly tighten the muscles.**
  - ▣ **Squeeze as tight as you can.**
- **Then, relax the muscles.**
  - ▣ **Let the tightness flow away.**
  - ▣ **Your face should feel relaxed and may be warm or tingly.**
- **Stay in this state of calmness for a moment.**
  - ▣ **Keep your breaths deep and slow.**

# Muscle Relaxation

- **Next, focus on your neck muscles.**
  - ▣ **Do the same steps to relax the muscles in your neck.**
- **Then, move your focus downward.**
  - ▣ **Tighten and relax the muscles of every part of your body as you go.**

# Music Relaxation

- **Lie down or sit in your favorite chair.**
- **Close your eyes.**
- **Breathe slowly and deeply.**
- **Listen to music that is soothing.**
- **Let your mind and body relax with the soothing sounds.**



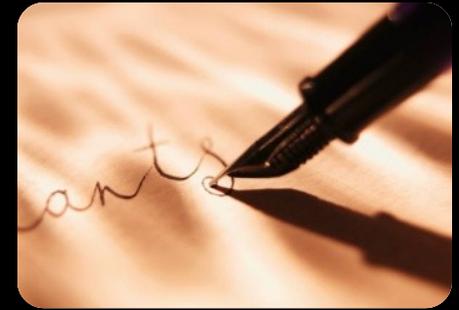
# Let's try it!

- **Below is a link you can listen to.**
- **Someone will guide you in these techniques:**
  - **Deep breathing**
  - **Guided imagery**
  - **Muscle relaxation exercises**

*Click on the highlighted link below for guided practice with these techniques!*

**<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/relax/downloads.html>**

# Other Stress Relievers



- **Journaling.**

- Write down your thoughts and feelings about a stressful event.
- This will help you work out what is bothering you.

- **Massage.**

- Get a massage to ease your tension.

- **Aroma Therapy.**

- Scented candles, lotions, or oils can relieve stress.
- Lavender, rosemary and ylang-ylang's are soothing scents.
- Search for the scent that works best for you.

# Exercise: Another Stress Reliever

- Try physical exercises like Yoga, Tai Chi, swimming or cycling.
- Look for free classes in your local newspaper or public library.
- Even walking can reduce your stress.



**\*You don't need a gym membership to exercise!**

# References

- **Dartmouth Health Promotion (n.d.). Guided Relaxation. *Relaxation Downloads*. Retrieved May 2, 2013 from <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/relax/downloads.html>**
- **Dartmouth Health Promotion (n.d.). Just this Breath. *Relaxation Downloads*. Retrieved May 2, 2013 from <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/relax/downloads.html>**
- **Dartmouth Health Promotion (n.d.). Special Place. *Relaxation Downloads*. Retrieved May 2, 2013 from <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/relax/downloads.html>**
- **Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Images: Techniques You Will Learn by [seainside](#), Abdominal Breathing by [Woody](#), Guided Imagery by [OneEighteen](#). Public Domain: Muscle Relaxation, Music Relaxation, Other Stress Relievers, Another Stress Reliever.**